

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

**ROCKY FLATS FIELD OFFICE
FEDERAL WORKFORCE TRANSITION
AND SITE CLOSURE**

**Presented to Gene Schmitt
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RFFO WORKFORCE TRANSITION ASSESSMENT

Purpose of Workforce Transition Strategy Development:

Reducing the workforce humanely and efficiently will be one of the most difficult tasks facing the Department of Energy and the Rocky Flats Field Office Management in its closure of the site. The need to reduce staff is clearly caused by the progress being accomplished in site closure and in workload changes. The recommended transition strategy is to maximize internal DOE and other Federal placement opportunities as employees become surplus to the closure mission, which minimizes the number of involuntary separations. The proposed transition strategy should focus on maximizing internal DOE, other Federal, or private sector placement opportunities, which in turn mitigates adverse actions. Success in achieving the necessary reductions with a minimum of workforce turbulence will largely be a result of RFFO's use of selected personnel programs and incentives. To assist the overall management and administration of this process, the Rocky Flats Field Office should capitalize on existing tools from DOE, OPM and other Federal agencies. Your management team must proactively lead the workforce by accepting the reality of site closure, which should be communicated regularly and with a consistent message. Your management team should also use available tools focused on outplacement. Your ability to effectively transition the RFFO workforce will require sufficient resources that are available to perform federal oversight functions and ensure continuity when faced with potentially high attrition rates, given successful outplacement of the federal staff.

Current Challenges facing RFFO:

The challenges which the RFFO faces in implementing a proactive workforce transition and outplacement program are numerous: 1) several key decisions are pending regarding the Consolidated Business Center and the need for business infrastructure staff, 2) the local job market is slow, and 3) RFFO workforce acceptance of the reality of imminent closure. The RFFO is in the initial steps in planning for workforce transition through your development and deployment of a functional analysis process which aggressively evaluates the need for positions based on mission requirements and anticipated closure milestones. No senior RFFO manager is currently responsible for workforce transition activities. Although some managers are clearly facing the reality of impending closure, consistent and clear communication about outplacement efforts has not been routinely imparted throughout the organization. Integrated closure planning and discussions have not begun to occur consistently between RFFO and the Ohio Field Office, although many benefits can be achieved by employing similar transition processes and tools and building from each other's success.

Currently the Office is one of only three site/field offices within the EM complex which is over its FY03 staffing allocation established by the Assistant Secretary in 2001. It has the highest number of employees receiving retention allowances in the Complex, based

on the per capita number of staff, and less than 5% of their staff participated in the FY2002 buy-outs.

The management team appears to have a divergent view of the need and urgency for proactively downsizing through outplacement of employees, which will be the best mechanism for avoiding involuntary separations. Some managers do not appear to have built their transition plans against a clear alignment to changes in mission. Other managers appear to be very realistic about the transition that awaits the workforce. In discussions with your managers who direct the business infrastructure elements, most understand the staffing impacts which will generate from the anticipated Consolidated Business Center (CBC). I am unable to assess the workforce perceptions of urgency and impending transition based on lack of observable data.

It appears that many misperceptions exist among the staff about the Consolidated Business Center (CBC). Some have been informed that the CBC will be housed in Denver, which can lead to the perception that RFFO positions are secure. Time frames, location, and implementation details associated with the CBC are not yet known, which impacts your staff and transition planning.

Functional Analyses (FA) are updated by management, which identify individual positions, key areas of responsibility, and the anticipated years required for the position to remain with the OFO. The FA appears to be at a preliminary stage of development. The process is of great relevance in transitional planning and would be strengthened if the following occurs: 1) Provide management's rationale for drawing down functional skills based on closure needs; 2) Identify current and projected staff redundancies; 3) Target opportunities for supervisory drawdown and organizational restructuring; 5) Identify inherently governmental work for use in resource forecasting; and 6) Explore obtaining business infrastructure support from the other EM sites or DOE organizations if the CBC is delayed.

A preliminary analysis of the RFFO functions found that 86 positions were considered to be of a technical nature and 88 are of a general, non-technical nature. Approximately 47% of the staff occupy nontechnical positions and RFFO has a sizable business/administrative infrastructure. In addition to current positions under A-76 consideration, which could result in the competitive sourcing of several EM functions, the Assistant Secretary, EM, has included all of the EM general engineers into the A-76 study for potential outsourcing consideration, totaling 656 positions. A critical challenge facing RFFO lies in the management team's decision of which functions remain critical to site closure over a three-year phasing.

Current demographics of staff:

The RFFO is widely diverse in age and years of service. Retirement eligibility data for the current staff of 168 is as follows:

RFFO Retirement Eligibility

Dates	Percentage of Available Population
1. Eligible by December 2003	1. 18%
2. Early-out Eligibility 12/03	2. 40%
3. Eligible by December 2010	3. 13%
4. Eligible by December 2013	4. 28%
5. Eligible by December 2018	5. 11%

Within the next year, approximately 58% of the RFFO staff will be eligible for retirement or early-out authority. Approximately 52% of the staff will not be eligible for any type of retirement for several years, representing the employees who are at greatest risk for involuntary separations.

RFFO Skill Needs Analysis through Site Closure

In recent years the RFFO Managers have stated that the Site will access its functional requirements and skill needs on a routine basis as the Site moves to closure. In early 2002 a team conducted a functional analysis designed to identify which specific functional requirements were needed for site closure, by year, through 2007. My resulting analysis indicated that the proposed numbers represented only marginal, incremental decreases and are overestimated, based on several factors: lack of information regarding the impacts of the Consolidated Business Center and subsequent consideration of alternative methods for obtaining business infrastructure support from other EM sites or DOE organizations; the need for an organizational decision on the degree of risk that is acceptable to closure environments; and the challenges associated with addressing organizational redundancies. The projected attrition by positions as coordinated by the Management Team on October 4, 2002 was as follows:

<u>CY2002</u>	<u>CY2003</u>	<u>CY2004</u>	<u>CY2005</u>	<u>CY2006</u>	<u>CY2007</u>
168 (actual)	154.3	124	90.1	56.5	22.5

During the week of October 16 – 24, 2002 the management team reexamined their projections and proposed the following minimum staffing levels required through the end of each calendar year based on closure requirements:

Revised:

<u>CY2002</u>	<u>CY2003</u>	<u>CY2004</u>	<u>CY2005</u>	<u>CY2006</u>	<u>CY2007</u>
168 (actual)	158.3	95.5	53	35	13.5

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Designate a senior line manager who will direct the RFFO transition activities.

The closure of the RFFO site and subsequent staff transition is not a human resource function; rather it is a human capital leadership responsibility which is appropriately worked by the RFFO management team.

There are 5 keys to successful downsizing: planning; attention to detail; attention to people; communication; and evaluation. A successful transition strategy requires goals and milestones, identification of stakeholders, integration of appropriate tools, analysis of costs, identification of resources, and the establishment of a timeline. The decisions of which skills and expertise are paramount for successful closure must be applied consistently and the management team must be consistent in how they address the issue of workforce transition. Taking care of people is the most important part of the transition, which speaks to the criticality of the effort being management-driven. **POC: Identified by RFFO Manager**

2. Develop a Communication Strategy. Effective and focused communication is critical in the successful closing of the RFFO site. Top leadership must provide clear messages and directions which supervisors and managers must echo. Communication must be frequent and should take a variety of forms: group meetings; one-on-one sessions; formal communications and E-mail messages which provide regularly scheduled information flow; and rumor control. Communication should share information about departing staff; highlight successes (such as outplacement numbers), and celebrate endings. Every piece of information given to employees or the public should be screened for accuracy before release. Employees should always be communicated with first, followed by immediate communications with the stakeholders and media. **POC: RFFO Management Team and Public Affairs Team Members**

3. Hire experienced advisors who have demonstrated expertise in leading significant downsizing efforts within the Department or DoD. Because of the turmoil associated with change, workforce problems will be exacerbated. Proactive EEO and employee management support will be critical during this time since an increased number of grievances and appeals, injury compensation cases, and sick leave usage may well increase. Workplace violence is possible and productivity will undoubtedly decrease as people become increasingly concerned about their livelihoods, financial standing, and careers. Employee agility and flexibility will be needed to cover position gaps and to respond to urgent project completion demands. Having access to a personal retirement counselor will be extremely important to the workforce in their decision making. To counter these issues, it is recommended that:

- Top-level HR advisory support to the RFFO management team be provided from the RFFO Human Resource Director, the EM Consolidated Business Center, EM Headquarters, EAP resources, Office of

Management, Budget and Evaluation (ME) of Headquarters, and selected national experts who have extensive placement/involuntary separation experience.

POC: EM-7 recommendations to RFFO Manager

4. Restructure and Collapse the Organizational Structure. As RFFO closes and draws down its number of federal employees. Currently RFFO has 36 employees in supervisory positions, which gives a current supervisory to staff ratio as a 1:5. The rationale for collapsing the organization is to maximize the number of employees engaged in work specific to RFFO Closure and to gradually eliminate any positions which are strictly supervisory or team leaders. It is expected that the small number of remaining employees closing the site are autonomous. **POC: RFFO Manager**

5. Create and Maintain a small Closure Cadre of Professionals who are crucial for Site Closure through a Focused Employment and Incentive Program . The need to maintain a select number of individuals who will finalize the site closure is critical. Likewise, these employees need to be relied on by the EM Complex as closure experts whose skills continue to be used in EM post-RFFO closure. The cadre positions will be temporarily based out of EM HQ, until the establishment of the CBC, and will become vital closure experts who will support the remaining EM Complex in subsequent closure activity. Various incentives are available for these selected staff who are critical to the completion of the closure activity. The select employees who remain at RFFO to close down the Site should be considered as unique national assets in that they possess skills and demonstrable expertise in site closure, which is required for other EM sites. EM should commit to retaining these select individuals and should place them into other positions across the Complex which will make use of the employees' competencies. Therefore, the cadre staff will have to be mobile.

POC: RFFO Manager and EM-1

6. Develop an Outplacement Strategy with the assistance of EM HQ, OFO, and other state/local resources. We need to exploit the use of a wide number of tools that will advance the outplacement of RFFO personnel, such as the use of private employment agencies, job fairs, web-based products, and placement activities. The Worklife Center is building a proposal for RFFO consideration, which may include the use of private employment agencies, job fairs, and other placement . **POC: Andre Fordham, EM-7 and Jackie Jones-Peters, HQ/ME.**

Additionally, the Kaiser Hill Transition Center will offer a full suite of professional resources and outplacement assistance for employees at RFFO. Services will include financial management, retirement counseling, spousal counseling, and connections to private sector job opportunities. Recommend that the RFFO and the Kaiser Hill lead POC's begin meeting monthly to discuss transition strategy and utilize resources. **POC: RFFO Transition Director**

7. RFFO Leadership Involvement in the Federal Personnel Council, which is affiliated with the Denver Federal Executive Board. The Council affords a monthly

opportunity to interface with the Denver personnel community and affords an invaluable time to discuss RFFO's employee placement needs. Additionally, the quarterly Denver Federal Executive Board provides a networking and discussion forum with other Denver executives. **POC: RFFO Manager and the Transition Director.**

8. Ensure that RFFO employees are given priority consideration for selected EM positions through the Hiring Control Process. This is already occurring through the use of the EM-1 hiring control process. **POC: RFFO Manager and EM -7 Director**

9. Training Program for Management Team on Issues associated with Workforce Transition to ensure the consistency of messages and practices are provided by the expert resource. The Management Team will need to learn about job and personal counseling techniques, offer resources, and be fully familiar with a full range of management tools. **POC: Transition Director**

10. Ensure sufficient resources are available to complete RFFO mission. Establish a contracting vehicle to achieve broad technical support needed to offset attrition. Consider establishing an agreement between EM and EH which implements an assessment program over the next 3 years to provide safety and health oversight of safety programmatic areas, such as fire protection, industrial hygiene, electrical safety, and radiological protection. Arrangements could include detailees for up to 12 months to support closure activities. **POC: RFFO Management Team**

11. Ensure Managerial Performance Accountability for Support to Outplacement and Workforce Transition Activities.. Recommend that the RFFO Management Team be held accountable for implementing the transition strategy through the performance management system. **POC: RFFO Manager**

12. Conduct On-going Diversity Trend Analysis. Recommend that the Director, EEO conduct a trend analysis based on the anticipated drawdown which identifies any sources of potential concerns to the RFFO Manager. **POC: Director, EEO**

Appendix 1

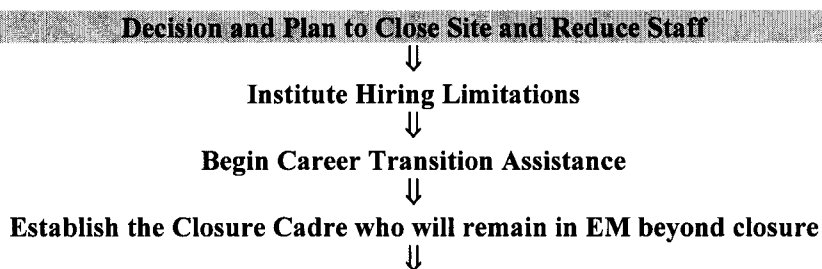
Workforce Transition Management Tools for Your Consideration

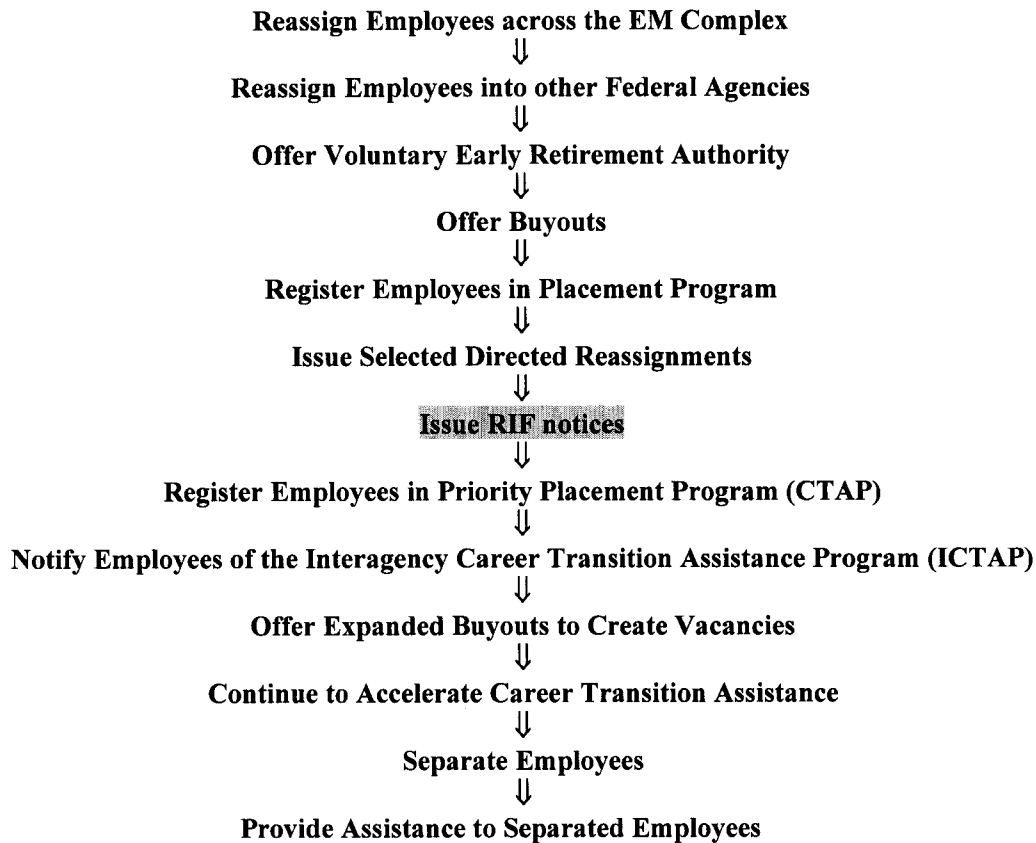
To achieve the necessary reductions with minimum workforce turbulence, we must capitalize on the existing EM Hiring Controls Program; combined and enhanced reduction and transition assistance programs that are under the purview of one RFFO line manager; and use existing administrative flexibilities from other Federal agencies and Congress. RFFO should consider using the following tools in achieving reduction targets and proactive placement:

- Updating and using a Realistic Functional Analysis to make staffing decisions
- Use of Hiring Limitations
- Use of existing placement programs
- Increased use of reassignments and extended details across the EM-Complex and the Department
- Use of reemployed annuitants or detailees for short-term staffing needs
- Use of Private Sector Temporaries with specialized skills for intermittent periods
- Opportunities for competitive selection with the EM Consolidated Business Center
- Career Transition Assistance
- Separation Incentives
- Training and retraining opportunities
- Delaying the organization to reduce number of supervisors
- Create a Critical Closure Cadre who are crucial for site closure

The proposed transition strategy for RFFO is to maximize internal DOE and other Federal placement opportunities and avoid involuntary separations. Once the reduction decision is made and the drawdown plan approved by the RFFO Manager and the Assistant Secretary, Office of Environmental Management, there are a variety of tools which management may use to reduce staff while meeting mission requirements and avoiding involuntary separations. The following chart demonstrates the importance of proactive outplacement at the onset of the transition effort:

GOAL: AVOIDING INVOLUNTARY SEPARATIONS





The following information highlights the most significant of the tools available to management:

Innovative Placement Strategies

- **Hiring Limitations:** Effective immediately, RFFO should discontinue hiring new or promoting employees or adding employees to their roles, either on full or part-time status, except through the use of limited term appointments or details. Limitations will include a total freeze on promotions or accessions, unless approved on a case-by-case basis through the EM hiring control process. All instances of limited-term appointments or detail requests will be approved by the Assistant Secretary through the hiring control process. Additionally, the Assistant Secretary may want to consider RFFO employees for any approved openings across the EM Complex, before any other recruiting source is exercised including internal hires.

Increased use of reassignments and extended details across the EM-Complex and the Department: The Assistant Secretary, EM, previously directed all personnel actions such as reassignment and details be reviewed and approved by the EM-1. This hiring control process is in place to review all recruitment, reassignment, and details from across the EM Complex. Recommend that EM-7,

Mr. Andre Fordham, and a RFFO Transition Manager serve as the coordinating focal points in working RFFO reassignments across EM and the Department.

Employees can be reassigned to another position at the same grade, either within or to another local commuting area. A legitimate management need must be met by the reassignment and the employee must qualify. Unless impacted by a collective bargaining limitation, an employee can be reassigned without regard to their relative reduction-in-force retention standing. Employees may volunteer to relocate outside the commuting area and RFFO should consider cost of travel and relocation expenses, cost of living expenses, grade level differences between offices and any necessary orientation or retraining costs required.

Assignment of RFFO personnel outside of the Department are currently being used for a small number of employees through the use of details. The assignment of personnel to external organizations must be covered by a written agreement between the DOE and the host. Details must be reimbursable except when the work is related to the organization's appropriations or when the detail will have a negligible impact on appropriations. GC concurrence is required and the agreement should address time and attendance and performance expectations. Recommend that RFFO request a waiver from EM-1 which would allow for employees to be placed directly into details as part of your proactive placement program, with a follow-up monthly report to inform the EM-1 of detail status.

- **Opportunities for competitive selection with the EM Consolidated Business Center.** The Consolidated Business Center will merge critical business infrastructure in support of selected organizations. Functions are expected to include: information technology, human resource management, legal, contracting and procurement, financial management, and logistics. The location of the Consolidated Center is to be determined. Current staffing plans anticipate that employees from across EM will be eligible to compete for the Center's positions, although a transfer of function analysis will be conducted.
- **Opportunities for Infrastructure Support from other EM or DOE Organizations:** RFFO may enter into support agreements with other EM sites or DOE organizations for Human Resource, Safety, Engineering, Acquisition and Procurement, Logistics, Legal Counsel, or Financial Management services, which would enable the site to drawdown staff levels more rapidly.
- **Meet Short-term Staffing Needs as federal employees are placed into new positions:** Agencies have the authority to:
 - **Use Intergovernmental Personnel Act Assignments:** An IPA assignment is a temporary transfer of skilled personnel between the federal government and State and local governments, institutions of higher learning, Native American tribal governments, and eligible non-Federal organizations (i.e., FFRDCs). The assignments are intended to:

1) strengthen management capabilities of the organizations; 2) facilitate the transfer and use of new technologies; 3) develop and implement policies and programs; provide program or developmental experience that will enhance DOE employee performance.

Directors of Human Resources Management approves formal requests for eligibility certifications of other organizations which intend to participate in the assignments, with the concurrence of the Assistant General Council. The Executive Resources Board Chair approves IPA assignments for all SES, SL, ST and excepted service pay bands IV and V positions. Heads of DOE Elements approve assignments and extensions. Assignments should be made for 2 years; however assignments may be extended for an additional 2 years allowing for a maximum consecutive term of 4 years. A DOE employee may not serve more than a total of 6 years on an IPA over their entire career. Participating organizations may negotiate the arrangements governing an assignment. Financial impacts include pay, fringe benefits, relocation costs, travel and per diem expenses. Participating organizations may agree to reimburse, partially reimburse, or non-reimburse the assignment. Usually both organizations share the costs. The issue of returning to duty would need to be addressed in RFFO use of IPA's. The issue of workforce RIF impacts for employees on IPA's will need to be researched with OPM.

- **Use Term Appointments for 1-4 years** when the need for the employee's services is not permanent. Recruitment is accomplished through the competitive process (5CFR part 316, subpart C)
- **Employ experts and consultants for temporary and intermittent employment.** (5 U.S.C. 3109) The excepted service appointment authority is used to hire expertise to perform this work. An expert is specifically qualified by education and experience to perform difficult and challenging tasks in a particular field beyond the usual range of achievement. A consultant provides valuable and pertinent advice generally drawn from a high degree of broad administrative, professional, or technical knowledge or experience. This authority differs from employing experts and consultants through procurement contracts.
- **Non-competitive temporary appointments for 30% or more disabled veterans** that are retired from active military service or rated by the Dept of Veteran Affairs in the preceding year. There is no grade limitation for this authority but the appointee must meet all qualification requirements. (5 U.S.C. 3112; 5 CFR 316.302, etc.)
- **Waiver of Dual Pay Limitation**, which includes waiving the 40 hours per week limitation and recruiting current Federal employees for 2nd jobs under emergency conditions relating to health, safety, protection of life or

property, or national emergency or when services cannot be obtained otherwise (5 U.S.C 5533, 5 CFR part 550, subpart E).

- **Commercial temporary help services** for brief periods (120 days with extension of an additional 120 days) for short-term needs. This option may be used only when regular recruitment and hiring procedures are impractical and the service is purchased through the federal procurement system (5 CFR part 300, subpart E).
- **Use of Reemployed Annuitants.** An annuitant can be rehired into Federal Service at their previous grade or lower – no promotions are allowed unless the position is advertised through a public notice and the employee qualifies. If no one qualifies under ICTAP, you can rehire the individual without further competition through a name request. The advertisement must run for 5 working days.

Reemployment may increase an annuitant's retirement and death benefits and may receive either a supplemental or redetermined annuity. A supplemental annuity is an annuity that is added on to the present annuity. The annuitant must be reemployed on a full-time, continuous basis for at least one year (or part-time equivalent) to earn a supplemental annuity. A redetermined annuity is recomputed and takes the place of the existing annuity. The annuitant must be reemployed for at least 5 years (or part-time equivalent).

- **Career Transition Assistance:** Transition services should focus on employee transitional planning/outplacement efforts. We should plan to identify resources for employees with federal and private sector companies in the Denver area, in addition to working with the Colorado State Employment Agency. Some state programs provide a virtual worklife center that provides tools for transition accessible over the Internet and career fairs with federal, state, local government and private sector companies, which we need to explore.
- **Separation Incentives (Buy-outs):** Authorized by 5 USC 5597(e), employees can receive up to \$25,000 to leave voluntarily, if this will avoid an involuntary separation due to RIF. Buyout takers may not be reemployed by other Federal agencies within 5 years unless they repay the incentive. Buyouts should be targeted to surplus functions and grades to avoid involuntary separations. The EM-1 has approved pursuing buy-out and early-out authority this year for both closure sites.
- **Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA):** Title 5, US Code, established VERA to help agencies minimize involuntary separations resulting from downsizing and closure. VERA allows retirement under reduced age and service requirements (50 years with 20 years of service, any age with 25 years of service). Under CSRS the retirement annuity is reduced by 2% per year for each year the

employee is under age 55. There is no reduction under FERS. Agencies can use this authority alone or in conjunction with buyout programs to ease anticipated reductions in force as long as an involuntary separation or downgrade caused by RIF is avoided. The Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, FY2000, restored permanent VERA regulatory authority to the Office of Personnel Management.

- **Deferred Annuity:** Under CSRS, if an employee is ineligible for an immediate annuity, an employee may be entitled to a deferred annuity at age 62 if the employee has: 1) completed at least 5 years of federal service and do not take a refund of retirement contributions after separating; and 2) been employed under the retirement system for at least one year within the 2-year period immediately preceding separation. Under FERS, if you separate and apply for a deferred annuity at your minimum retirement age with at least 10 years, but less than 30 years of service, the benefit will be reduced at a rate of 5% a year for each year under age 62. There is no reduction if you have at least 20 years of service and the annuity begins at age 60 or later. If the employee separates before retirement eligibility and takes a deferred annuity, they are not eligible to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. They may have coverage under the program as a family member based on spouses' enrollment but not based on their own deferred annuity.
- **Maintain the "Critical Few" who are crucial for site closure through a focused incentive program .** Under Section 3136 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-398), Congress authorized the Secretary of Energy to provide enhanced incentives to maintain an effective Federal staff at the Department of Energy (DOE) closure projects. The enhanced incentives are required to retain essential Federal staff at a closure site until their skills are no longer needed and to assist in the transition of closure site employees to other DOE sites, other Federal agencies, alternative employment, or retirement. The legislated retention incentives include:
 - **Annual Leave Accumulation [section 3136(d)(1)].** The Secretary may provide the right to accumulate annual leave provided by section 6303 of title 5, USC, up to a total of not more than 90 days, or not more than 720 hours based on the standard work week. Recommend that the annual leave cap be removed for individuals selected as the 'critical few.'
 - **Retention Allowance [section 3136(d)(2)].** The Secretary may provide the right to be paid a retention allowance in a lump sum in the amount of not more than 30 percent of the employee's basic annual pay in compliance with section 5754(b) of title 5, USC.

Other incentives which should be considered included:

- **Special Act or Service Awards** are used to recognize performance which is substantially beyond expectations on a specific assignment or aspect of an assignment or job function. It is also appropriate for employees who have performed exemplary service while on an IPA or detail, who have been

transferred, or are otherwise ineligible for awards based on performance ratings. The maximum award is \$10,000, with Secretarial approval, with no restriction on the number per year. Heads of DOE Elements can approve awards up to \$7500. The nominator has to justify the award based on the value of the benefit derived from performance.

- **Time-off Awards** which can be approved for up to 40 hours are also a form of performance recognition for work which is substantially beyond expectations.
- **On-the-Spot Awards** for up to \$500 may be granted to employees for a significant deed or accomplishment performed with exceptional speed and quality under difficult circumstances. These awards are no longer limited to a set number per year.

Other incentives worth considering:

- o **Exceptional Service Award** for outstanding service or exemplary accomplishment of responsibilities, unusual initiative in efficiency or improved management, outstanding executive or technical ability, or unusual devotion to duty.
- o **Presidential Recognition and Departmental Awards**, which can only be approved by the Secretary, include **The President's Award for Distinguished Federal Service** (exceptional achievements of unusual benefit to the nation); **The President's Management Improvement Award**, for contributions resulting in tangible benefits to the Government of \$250,000 or more; **Presidential Letters of Commendation**; **The Secretary's Award**; **The Award for Valor**; and **the Meritorious Service Award**.

Involuntary Separation

- **Reduction in Force (RIF):** RIF is a structured, orderly process through which employees compete for available positions or continued employment during downsizing and closure, respectively. RIF regulations are largely derived from the Veteran's Preference Act of 1944. Management application of RIF procedures is required when an employee faces separation or change to a lower grade due to the effects of site closure. The placement rights of the employee depend on the competitive RIF process based on an employee's retention standing and qualifications. RIF actions are based on length of service and performance; veterans generally have preference over non-veterans. Those last hired are generally the first fired. Employees are entitled to at least 60 days notice before a RIF is effective. Under certain circumstances, employees may volunteer for RIF to help avoid the separation of another employee.

Management has several responsibilities which derive from RIF policy and procedures. They must keep employees and their organizations informed at all steps of the process, ensure consistent application of the RIF process, counsel employees on their individual rights process, and advise them of outplacement opportunities. Employees must be provided advance notice of the adverse action,

must be provided the opportunity to review pertinent regulations and program records, and must be made aware of the process for filing appeals.

Structure of the RIF competitive process depends on: 1) competitive areas, which include the geographical and organizational boundaries within which employees compete for retention; 2) competitive levels, which include groupings of positions within the competitive area which are at the same grade and are so similar in duties and responsibilities that they are considered interchangeable; and 3) retention standing, which is the order in which employees are ranked in their competitive areas. Order is determined by tenure of employment, veteran's preference, length of creditable service (may include military time), and performance evaluations over the past 4 years.

- **Voluntary Reductions in Force (VRIF):** DOE allows the release of an employee who volunteers for separation in a RIF even though the employee is not otherwise subject to separation. Severance pay and continuation of health insurance (government portion) is paid, but the use of VRIF precludes the payment of separation incentives.
- **Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP).** CTAP applies to **surplus** individuals - those who receive certificates of expected separation (CES) or notice of eligibility for discontinued service retirement, and those who are deemed **displaced** – those whose positions are designated for abolishment under notices of Reduction In Force (RIF) or who have declined directed reassignments. Under CTAP, DOE selecting officials follow the current order of priority for hiring **well qualified** DOE employees (knowledge, skills, and abilities clearly exceed the minimum qualification requirements for the position but do not necessarily meet the highly qualified criteria for selection):
 1. must select surplus or displaced employees within own element (e.g., SC, EM, etc.) and the commuting area of the vacancy (e.g., within 25 miles of job location);
 2. may then select non-surplus or non-displaced employees within own element and commuting area of vacancy;
 3. must select surplus or displaced employees from other elements within the commuting area of the vacancy;
 4. may then select non-surplus or non-displaced employees from other elements within the commuting area of the vacancy;
 5. must select surplus or displaced employees within own element from other commuting areas;
 6. may then select non-surplus or non-displaced employees within own element from other commuting areas;
 7. must select surplus or displaced employees from other elements;
 8. may select any other DOE permanent employee.

The Assistant Secretary, EM, could supplement the CTAP benefit by directing that surplus closure site employees be given priority consideration for all EM-funded vacancies. Under an EM priority selection process, the surplus employee could be entitled to selection for any vacant EM position being filled in which he or she was qualified. The Assistant Secretary, EM, could allow exceptions to this entitlement for career-ladder positions and other extenuating circumstances, as appropriate.

- **Interagency Career Transition Plan (ICTAP):** In response to a Presidential Directive issued in 1995, the Office of Personnel Management established ICTAP. Under ICTAP, employees who have RIF separation notices receive special selection priority when they apply and are qualified for vacancies in other Federal agencies. To be eligible, employees must: be separated or facing separation; have a fully successful or equivalent performance rating; submit an application for an agency vacancy; and be well qualified for that position. The vacancy must be in the same commuting area as the location where you are being separated. If the eligibility requirements are met, the agency must select the applicant before hiring outside the agency. Eligibility for ICTAP begins on the date RFFO issues a RIF separation notice. A copy of the RIF separation notice must be attached with the application. RFFO will notify employees of this program when RIF notices are issued. The fundamental challenge with ICTAP is that it prohibits agencies from hiring new candidates without considering ICTAP eligibles but they can continue to hire from within.
- **Employee Assistance After Separation:** In the event of involuntary separations, employees will get a comprehensive package of assistance and benefits to include: unemployment compensation; continued health insurance; counseling; placement assistance; and use of annual leave to qualify for retirement. Most employees separated by RIF are entitled to payment for unused annual leave, severance pay (either in bi-weekly or lump sum payments), and unemployment compensation. If employees elect to continue their health insurance, the Department will pay the employer portion of the premium and any administrative fees for up to 18 months. They may also use their accumulated annual leave to meet retirement eligibility.